

In the Specification

Mark-ups reflecting changes are provided on the attached sheets. Please amend the specification as follows:

Please replace the paragraph at page 2, lines 2-16 with:

A1
--In the modern economic environment, a business or other party may engage in a planning activity involving one or more other businesses or parties. For example, an end product manufacturer and a component manufacturer may jointly plan the product manufacturer's procurement of components from the component manufacturer. These two parties may plan, along with a third technology partner, a joint marketing campaign involving all three of these parties. In a competitive business environment involving independent parties, each party naturally seeks to increase the economic value it derives from the planning activity, possibly to the detriment of other parties, subject to certain standard constraints or agreed upon rules. As a result, a party may be unwilling to share with other parties information relating to its internal operations, the values it associates with the planning activity, and any other proprietary information. Furthermore, parties and their pertinent information may change during the course of the negotiation. It is a goal to obtain a sufficiently optimal global solution that balances competing interests of multiple parties to a planning activity while satisfying their particular needs. Previous techniques have been inadequate in this environment.--

Please replace the paragraph at page 3, lines 16-28 with:

A2
--The present invention provides a number of technical advantages over previous techniques. The present invention makes possible multi-party constrained optimization by generating multi-party constrained optimization problems (MOPs) and providing optimal solutions to the MOPs, while allowing the parties to the negotiation to keep their objectives and constraints from one another and, at least in part, from the broker. In addition, the present invention allows handling of stochastic or otherwise dynamic MOPs, in which one or more parties, objectives, or constraints may change during the negotiation. The present invention includes schemes for achieving Pareto-optimal and globally fair solutions, and further allows the parties to participate in the filtering and selection of global solutions the broker generates, increasing the confidence the parties have in the broker and the operations

Cont.
A2 used. These and other technical advantage make the present invention well suited for modern multi-party planning environments. Other technical advantages are readily apparent to those skilled in the art.--

Please replace the paragraph at page 4, lines 7-8 with:

A3 --FIGURE 4 is an exemplary table illustrating solutions to a multi-party constrained optimization problem; and--

Please replace the paragraph at page 5, lines 2-16 with:

A4 --FIGURE 1 illustrates an exemplary system 10 to solve one or more multi-party constrained optimization problems (MCOPs). System 10 includes multiple parties 12 that are coupled to and communicate information related the MCOPs with broker 14 using associated broker links 16, which may be any appropriate wireline, wireless, or other communications links. Parties 12 may be individuals, business, or any other suitable entities that are each planning an activity that involves one or more other parties 12. Broker 14 is preferably an impartial individual, business, or other entity appropriate to communicate with the parties 12 to facilitate their negotiation of a sufficiently optimal solution to one or more associated MCOPs. Parties 12 may select broker 14 through a preliminary negotiation or in another suitable manner. Parties 12 communicate with one another using one or more party links 18, which may be any suitable wireline, wireless, or other communications links. One or more rules governing the negotiation between parties 12, the authorized activities of broker 14, any commission payable to broker 14, and other suitable considerations may also be decided during a preliminary negotiation among parties 12, with or without interaction with broker 14.--
